Rare intellectual

VEMANA Vikasa Kendram of Vijayawada arranged a function here last week at which the attention of the public was focused on two of the intellectuals of yesteryears whose calibre and achievements are not known to the present generation. Two books Digavalli Venkata Siva Rao's "Viresalingam-Veluguneedalu" and the late Vasireddy Durga Sada Siveswara Prasad's "Bouddhula Samskriti" were released by Mr Justice P A Choudary at that meeting. Prasad, known as Jayantipuram Raja, translated some rare books on the Buddhism from Pali into [illegible] and popularised Buddhist literature in these parts for which he was honoured with the title. "Baudha Sahitya Samrat"

On this occasion, 89-year old, Digavalli Venkata Siva Rao, was felicitated. It is a very unusual type of felicitation in these days when nothing is done without purpose. Born in Kakinada in 1898, he had his early schooling at Rajahmundry and later graduated from the Presidency College, Madras, and took his law degree from Madras Law College. He was called to the Vijayawada Bar in 1922 where he practised till he called it a day in 1967. He shifted to Hyderabad in 1977 to spend the evening of his life with his sons there. It was from that seclusion, Mr Tripuraneni Venkateswara Rao persuaded him to come out and appear before the public, not that the honour would make any difference to him but that it would serve as a sort of inspiration for the present youth to see such an embodiment of excellence.

A prolific writer on a variety of topics on social, political cultural and literary aspects of our people, he has more than 50 publications to his credit and many more are still in manuscript with him. All his works reveal his analytical and incisive mind with its unceasing quest for truth As prof Nageswara Rao of S V University pointed out, Mr Siva Rao had produced material which could fetch more than a score of doctorates for the very in-depth research he made into everyone of the subjects he took up. Such a person of rare intellectual acumen and probing mind has failed to attract the attention of our seats of learning where honour and titles normally go to men wielding power or pelf and rarely to those of solid learning and valuable contribution to knowledge. The loss is certainly not his.

Unfortunately, Mr. Siva Rao got involved in a controversy regarding Viresalingam and his latest book presents the social reformer in light and shade, in his true colours. Why has he chosen to reveal certain murky details about him when it is the tendency of the people to remember only the good and forget all that is not flattering about him after his death? 'Nil nisi bonum', nothing but the good about the dead, they say. Mr. Siva Rao says that he had known Viresalingam very intimately and had great admiration for him but, he shall be failing in his 'Satya parisodhana' if he suppresses certain things known to him as true. As Mr. Justice choudary pointed out, whoever keeps silent is a traitor to humanity. Suppression of truth is as much a sin as spreading falsehood, he says. It is the bounden duty of every right-thinking person to expose when someone tries to take credit that is not due to him and not to do so is nothing short of intellectual dishonesty and Mr. Siva Rao has done his duty fearlessly and for that we are all deeply indebted to him, said Mr. Justice choudary, in his tribute to one of the fast vanishing tribe of intellectuals who stood for certain values.

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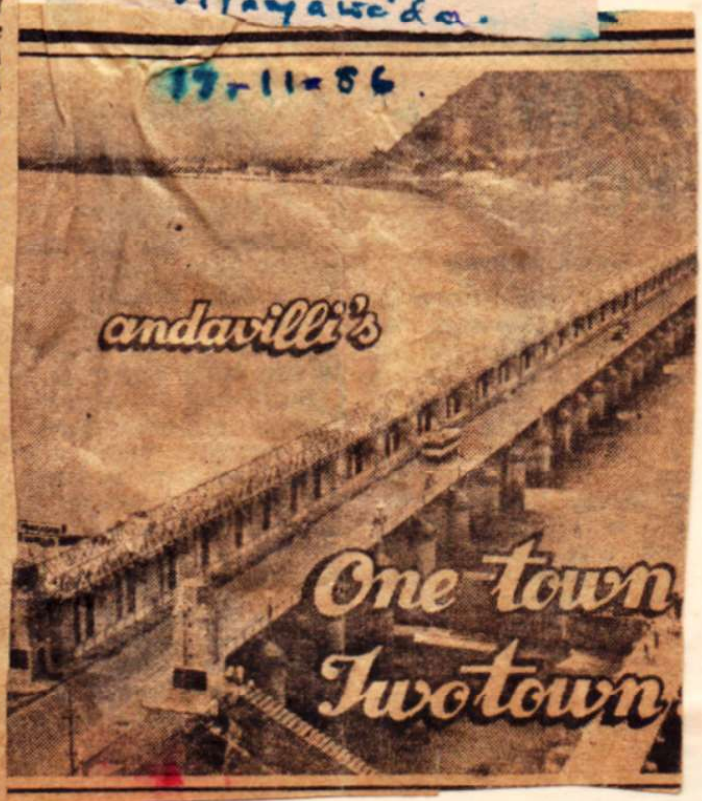

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